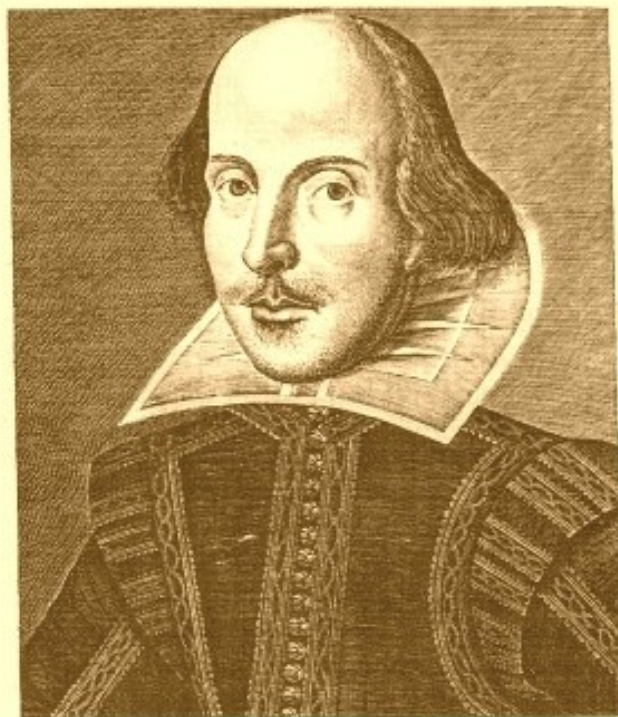


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to Modern English - for contemporary  
readers and performers

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# Shakespeare For White Trash: Measure For Measure

*Classic literature translated into Modern English by Crad Kilodney*

## **October 7, 2010 – Author’s Note:**

*“Shakespeare For White Trash” is a series of condensed rewrites designed to make Shakespeare understandable and enjoyable to those who have little or no knowledge of him. The plots and characters are unchanged, but everything else has been radically restyled. Read my versions and you’ll be a Shakespeare fan forever!*

*These plays are intended to be performed, as well as read.*

## **Main Characters**

Duke Vincentio — ruler of Vienna (His disguise is “Friar Lodowick”).)

Escalus — old lord

Angelo — the Duke’s Deputy

Lucio — white trash friend of Claudio (Shakespeare refers to him as a “fantastic,” whatever that means. His most noteworthy trait is his lack of loyalty.)

Two Gentlemen

Mistress Overdone — brothel madam

Claudio

Juliet — Claudio’s fiancée

Isabella — Claudio’s sister

Provost (Similar to a chief magistrate)

Mariana — Angelo’s former fiancée

Pompey — pimp and bartender for Mistress Overdone

Friar Thomas

Friar Peter

Francisca — a nun

Justice

Elbow — constable

Froth — customer in the brothel

Abhorson — executioner

Barnardine — prisoner

Varrius — friend of the Duke

**Gist of the story:** Duke Vincentio leaves Vienna apparently for unspecified reasons and leaves Lord Angelo in charge. In reality, he's still in Vienna, disguised as a friar. Vienna has gotten morally slack. The old laws haven't been enforced. The Duke thinks it's time to be stricter, but he doesn't want to be the one to do it. He knows Angelo will be a tougher disciplinarian. But the Duke will remain as a secret observer to make sure things go all right. Angelo's new power goes to his head. He sentences Claudio to death for getting his fiancée, Juliet, pregnant. Claudio's sister, Isabella, who is preparing to become a nun, goes to Angelo to plead for Claudio's life. Angelo propositions her: if she will have sex with him, he'll pardon Claudio. Deeply offended, she reports this to Claudio. He, too, is offended — but he also wants to live. The Duke, disguised as Friar Lodowick, intervenes by suggesting a way out. Angelo's former fiancée, Mariana, will substitute for Isabella in the darkened room, Angelo won't know the difference, and he'll pardon Claudio. Unfortunately, Angelo breaks his promise and decides to execute Claudio anyway. Friar Lodowick tricks Angelo by sending him the head of another condemned criminal. Then he stages his "return" to Vienna and has Mariana and Isabella confront Angelo and expose him for his hypocrisy. Angelo is mortified and asks to be put to death. The Duke shows mercy, however. Angelo will marry Mariana. Claudio will marry Juliet. And the Duke intends to marry Isabella.

(Scholars have gotten very bogged down analyzing this play as a complex problem of morality. None of the characters seems to be consistent. But that's Shakespeare's point. Nobody's perfect. Almost everyone in the play is put into a strange moral situation where nothing is clear-cut. The focus of attention is, of course, Angelo, whose moral weakness is shocking. Our audience will put him in the same category as the evangelist caught in a motel with a hooker. The play is a showcase of human frailties. But, as in all Shakespeare comedies, goodness overcomes the frailties and averts a bad outcome. And as many people as possible get married.)

**Act 1, Scene 1.** *Vienna. Duke Vincentio comes in with Escalus and Attendants.*

*Duke:* Escalus, I'm going to Poland for a while, and I have to leave somebody in charge while I'm gone. You know as much about the city government as anyone, so you can be a big help.

*Escalus:* I'm ready to serve, sir.

*Duke:* Fine. Actually, I want a Deputy who will be—mm, shall we say—rather strict. That’s why I want to leave Angelo in charge. *(To an Attendant)* Go get Angelo. *(The Attendant leaves.)*—So, what do you think? Is he the man for the job?

*Escalus:* I think so. He’s very moral and strict with himself, so he’ll be that way with others. I’ve always known him to be a model of integrity.

*Duke:* Yes. I agree.—Ah, here he comes.

*(Angelo comes in.)*

*Angelo:* Your Grace.

*Duke:* Angelo, everyone agrees that you’re a perfect example of honour and virtue—and the most moral man in Vienna.

*Angelo:* Thank you, sir. I’ve always tried to live by the highest standards a good Christian can aspire to.

*Duke:* Indeed. Of course, virtues are given to us so that we can put them to use in everyday life.

*Angelo:* Oh, yes. Absolutely.

*Duke:* I’m leaving Vienna for a little while. I have some, uh, confidential business in Poland. I want to put you in charge while I’m gone. You’ll have complete power as my Deputy. Escalus will be your second-in-command. What do you say?

*Angelo (Feigning uncertainty):* Oh—such responsibility—I hardly know if I’m ready.

*Duke:* None of that. You’re ready. I’ve made up my mind. You’ll be in charge. Just enforce the laws as you see fit. Use your own judgment. I’ll keep in touch. You’ll get letters from me from time to time.

*Angelo:* When are you leaving?

*Duke:* Immediately.

*Angelo:* Oh, but we should organize some sort of public send-off.

*Duke:* No, I have no time for that. And I don’t like that sort of thing anyway.—So, good luck.

*(The Duke shakes hands with Angelo and Escalus.)*

*Angelo:* Have a good trip, and may God protect you.

*Escalus:* Good luck, sir, and come back to us soon.

*Duke:* Thank you. I will.

*(The Duke leaves.)*

*Escalus:* Well, my lord, we should discuss what my duties will be.

*Angelo:* Yes, yes. We'll go and discuss it right now.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 1, Scene 2.** *A street. Lucio comes in with two Gentlemen. All three are a bit seedy.*

*Lucio:* Did you hear the one about the pirate ship that sailed with the Nine Commandments nailed on the wall?

*1st Gent:* Nine?

*Lucio:* Yeah. One was cut out and tossed away.

*1st Gent:* Which one?

*Lucio:* Thou shalt not steal.

*All Three:* Ha, ha!

*2nd Gent:* You should've guessed that.

*1st Gent:* Hey, you want to hear a disease?

*Lucio:* Hear a disease?

*1st Gent:* Yeah.

*Lucio:* Okay, let's hear it.

*(The First Gentleman claps his hands once loudly, and they all laugh.)*

*Lucio:* You'd know all about that, wouldn't you?

*1st Gent:* What do you mean? I'm perfectly healthy.

*Lucio:* Well, I'll drink to your health, but I wouldn't drink from your cup.

*2nd Gent:* That's telling him!

*Lucio:* And we know where his *(Clap)* came from, don't we?

*1st Gent:* You've both been there, too, so don't talk.

*Lucio:* And speaking of which, here comes the madam herself.

*(Mistress Overdone comes in.)*

*1st Gent:* Mistress overdone — the housemother of Try My Pie Sorority.

*(Laughter)*

*Mist. Over:* Wise guys. Hey, do you know who's been arrested?

*2nd Gent:* No. Who?

*Mist. Over:* Claudio.

*1st Gent:* No way!

*Mist. Over:* Yes. I saw him get arrested. And he's going to be executed.

*Lucio:* Executed! What the hell for?

*Mist. Over:* He got his fiancée, Juliet, pregnant. They're taking him to jail now.

*Lucio (To the Gentlemen):* We gotta check this out. Come on.

*(Lucio and the two Gentlemen leave. Then Pompey comes in.)*

*Pompey:* Mistress, there's a proclamation just been posted.

*Mist. Over:* About what?

*Pompey:* All the brothels in the suburbs are going to be shut down.

*Mist Over:* Oh, fucking hell.—What about the ones in the city?

*Pompey:* For the time being, they're still okay.

*Mist. Over:* That won't be for long.—Damn. Business was bad enough, but now—

*Pompey:* Don't worry. You'll get set up somewhere else, and I'll still be your bartender.

*Mist. Over:* We'll see. Come on, we'd better go back to the house.

*(They leave. Then the Provost comes in with Claudio as a prisoner, followed by Juliet and Officers.)*

*Claudio:* Do you have to parade me through the streets like this? If you're going to take me to prison, just take me to fucking prison.

*Provost:* I'm just the Provost. I'm just following Lord Angelo's orders.

*Claudio:* He's an asshole. Now that he's in charge of the city, he thinks he's God.

*(Lucio and the two Gentlemen return.)*

*Lucio:* Claudio! What the fuck happened, man?

*Claudio:* Oh—don't you know I'm the worst criminal in the history of Vienna? I got her pregnant.

*Juliet:* We are married—by agreement, at least. Just not officially.

*Claudio:* That's right. We have a marriage contract. But there was just a little hang-up about the dowry, that's all. But that would've been straightened out. We were definitely going to get married. Okay, so she got pregnant. You know, it happens sometimes. But just because we haven't had the actual legal ceremony yet, technically it's a crime—and I can be executed for it.

*Lucio:* But nobody enforces that law any more. It hasn't been enforced as long as Vincentio has been Duke of Vienna.

*Claudio:* Tell that to Deputy Rat-Fucker Angelo. The big holy moralist. He's on a power trip. He wants to make a name for himself. Probably wants to be made a saint. What a sanctimonious prick!

*Lucio:* Send word to the Duke. He'll overturn the death penalty.

*Claudio:* I can't. He's gone. I don't know how to reach him.—Look, do me a favour.

*Lucio:* Sure.

*Claudio:* My sister, Isabella, is at the convent. She's going to become a nun. Go and tell her what's happened. Tell her to go and talk to Angelo and try to change his mind. She's a sincere girl. She knows how to talk to people. If anyone can persuade him, she can. And tell her to do it as soon as possible.

*Lucio:* I'll go and see her. Don't you worry.

*Claudio:* Thanks a lot, bro.

*Provost:* We have to get going, sir.

*Claudio:* Yeah, yeah, I know.

*(They all leave, but Lucio separately.)*

**Act 1, Scene 3.** *A monastery. The Duke comes in with Friar Thomas.*

*Duke:* Friar Thomas, I've come to see you for a confidential reason.

*Friar Thomas:* Of course, my lord. You can trust me.

*Duke:* As you know, I've left Lord Angelo in charge of Vienna as my Deputy. Everyone thinks I've gone to Poland, but I intend to stay here as an observer. And I want to be disguised as a friar.

*Friar Thomas:* You're certainly welcome here, sir. But what's it all about?

*Duke:* Well, you know, Vienna has gotten a bit too loose over the years—I mean, a bit too immoral and undisciplined. I should blame myself. There are certain laws on the books that I never bothered to enforce. I didn't want to be too strict with the people. I'm not really a disciplinarian. But Lord Angelo is just the opposite. He's a ramrod, you know—very straight. I'd rather let him be the one to enforce the laws. That way the people won't be angry with me. But I have to stay here to see how he handles things generally.

*Friar Thomas:* I get it.

*Duke:* And I have to know if he's the sort of man he appears to be, or whether all this power will have some kind of bad effect on him.

*Friar Thomas:* Yes, yes. You want to be right here in case something goes wrong.

*Duke:* Exactly. So I need to get fitted out like a real friar, and maybe you can coach me a bit.

*Friar Thomas:* Of course, my lord. No problem.

*Duke:* And remember—this is top secret.

*Friar Thomas:* Right, sir.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 1, Scene 4.** *A convent. Isabella comes in with Francisca, a nun.*

*Isab:* Are those all the rules of the Order of Saint Clare? You have no other privileges?

*Fran:* Why, did you want more?

*Isab:* Oh, no. I was actually hoping the Order would be more strict.

*Fran:* Well, we are a conservative order, but we're not extremists.

*Lucio (Heard within):* Hello? Anyone here?

*Fran:* I can't talk to a man. I'm not allowed to. But you're not officially a nun yet, so you can. Find out what his business is.

*(Francisca leaves.)*

*Isab:* Who's calling, sir?

*(Lucio comes in.)*

*Lucio:* Greetings, virgin! My name is Lucio. I'm looking for Isabella, Claudio's sister.

*Isab:* I'm Isabella.

*Lucio:* Your brother sent me, miss. He's in trouble.

*Isab:* What's the matter?

*Lucio:* He's in prison.

*Isab:* Prison! What for?

*Lucio:* Aw, nothing bad, really. It's just that he got his fiancée pregnant, and now it's a big legal thing.

*Isab:* You're kidding me.

*Lucio:* Nope. I wouldn't lie to a holy lady like yourself.

*Isab:* Oh, please—you're making fun of me.

*Lucio:* You are going to be a nun, aren't you?

*Isab:* I'm not one yet. And I wouldn't call myself holy anyway. That would be vanity. But how did his fiancée get pregnant?

*Lucio:* How? What, do I have to explain it?

*Isab:* No, I didn't mean it that way. I mean, well, they're not married yet?



*Lucio:* No.

*Isab:* Tsk!—They couldn't wait?

*Lucio:* Well, they just—you know. I mean, as for as they're concerned, they're married. They just didn't have the ceremony to make it official.

*Isab:* Oh, dear.

*Lucio:* Do you know Juliet?

*Isab:* Of course. We went to school together. So why don't they just get married now?

*Lucio:* Well, if the Duke were here, I'm sure they would and there'd be no problem. But he went off to Poland—supposedly. Personally, I don't believe it. And he made Angelo his Deputy. And that guy is a totally cold-blooded s.o.b.—pardon my language—and he wants to enforce those old laws that nobody enforced for so many years, and he wants to make an example of your brother.—So—he gave him a death sentence.

*Isab:* Oh, no!

*Lucio:* Yeah. Anyway, your brother is asking you to go talk to Angelo and try to get him to change his mind.

*Isab:* Me? What can I do?

*Lucio:* What can you do? I don't know what you can do. You can try to be charming, I don't know. Soften him up. Give him a reason to think it over. Maybe he'll listen to a lady. Your brother thinks you can persuade him.

*Isab:* I'll try.

*Lucio:* Best be quick about it.

*Isab:* I'll go today. Tell my brother I love him, and I'll really try my best for him. I just have to tell the Mother Superior that I have to leave for a family emergency.

*Lucio:* All right, then. Goodbye.

*Isab:* Thank you for coming. Goodbye.

*(They leave separately.)*

**Act 2, Scene 1.** *A hall in Angelo's house. Angelo, Escalus, a Justice, and the Provost come in.*

*Angelo:* The law has to be enforced. If we have laws and we don't enforce them, then who will respect them?

*Escalus:* Yes, I understand, and I agree with you in principle. But sometimes there should be—shall we say—gentleness in the application of the law. I wouldn't execute Claudio. I knew his father. He was a

noble man. Perhaps Claudio made a mistake, but nobody's perfect. I think anyone could yield to temptation under the right circumstances—even someone as virtuous as you.

*Angelo:* It hasn't happened yet. And anyway, temptation is one thing, and actual crime is another. We can't just say that everyone has temptations, so we shouldn't punish any crimes. When it's as obvious as this, it has to be punished. And I would apply the same standard to myself. If I committed such a blatant crime, I'd deserve to be punished the same way. The matter is settled. Claudio must die.

*Escalus:* Tsk!—It's a pity.

*Angelo:* Provost, I want the execution carried out at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. You can arrange for a priest to visit him.

*Provost:* Yes, my lord.

*(The Provost leaves.)*

*Escalus (Aside):* Some people sin all their lives and get away with it, and some make just one mistake and pay for it.

*(Elbow and Officers come in with Pompey and Froth as prisoners. [Author's note: Elbow's mangling of the English language is reminiscent of Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing. The slightly stupid constable is a funny Shakespearean touch.] )*

*Elbow:* Come on, you louts! His lordship will hear all about your vile abusages!

*Angelo:* What's all this about? Who are you?

*Elbow:* Constable Elbow, sir, your loyal servant. I've brought these two odorous benefactors.

*Angelo:* Benefactors? Aren't they malefactors?

*Elbow:* They may be malefactors, too, for all I know. I wouldn't put it past them. They're two villains if I ever say one—or rather two—and if they ever had any of the vices or virtues that good Christians are supposed to have, I would have known it at once—assuming I had seen them.

*(Escalus is rolling his eyes for the benefit of the audience.)*

*Angelo:* Who are these men?

*Elbow:* Their names are Pompey and Froth. *(Indicates Pompey)* He's a bartender and pimp who works for Mistress Overdone. Her whorehouse was shut down, and now she runs a bath house, which I think is just a front for another whorehouse.

*Escalus:* How do you know?

*Elbow:* My wife was there and she told me.

*Escalus:* What was your wife doing in a whorehouse?

*Elbow:* She went looking for stewed prunes. She's pregnant, you see, and she has these cravings. And everyone knows all the whorehouses serve stewed prunes.

*Froth:* They respect tradition.

*Elbow:* And that's when she got into an alternation with this rascal here (*Indicates Froth*). But the important thing is that they did have prunes—only they wouldn't give her any.

*Pompey:* We only had two left, my lord, and we were keeping them in a fruit dish—not a fancy one, just one of those cheap three-penny dishes—although not to cast any dispersions on the manufacturers, who I'm sure make the best they can for three pennies.

*Escalus:* We don't care about the damned dish. Just tell us what happened.

*Pompey:* Yes, my lord. We only had two prunes because my friend Master Froth here ate the rest—but very honestly, mind you, because he paid for them.

*Froth:* Yes, I always pay.

*Pompey:* And they're good for you. And the clients like them.

*Froth:* Yes. That's why I go to the house—to have a nice bath and eat prunes.

*Escalus:* Will you get on with it! I want to know the origin of this complaint.

*Pompey:* We shall get to the origin because that comes last. Now, sir, look into this man's face (*Indicating Froth*). This is the face of a man who earns eighty pounds a year. His father died on Halloween—didn't he?

*Froth:* The night before, actually.

*Pompey:* And he—that is, Master Froth, not his father—was sitting in his favourite chair in the Bunch of Grapes—which is our VIP lounge—correct?

*Froth:* Yes, yes. It's quite comfy in the winter, being well ventilated.

*Angelo (Exasperated):* I've had enough of this. (*To Escalus*) You deal with it. And make sure they get a good whipping.

(*Angelo leaves.*)

*Escalus (After him):* Good night, my lord!—(*To Pompey*) Now, then, what happened to Elbow's wife, once more?

*Pompey:* Oh, sir, nothing was done to her once.

*Elbow (To Escalus):* I beseech you, sir, ingratiate this man until he tells the truth. I deplore you to show no mercy.

*Escalus:* Yes—right.—Now, what happened?

*Pompey:* Your Honour, I ask you to look in this man's face. (*On cue, Froth smiles stupidly.*) Do you not see the honesty in that face? Even cats and dogs can see it. That's why they run to him. Have you ever seen such a face in your whole life, sir?

*Escalus:* I have to admit I haven't.

*Pompey:* Do you see any evil in that face?

*Escalus:* Mm—no.

*Pompey:* Well, sir, his face is the worst part of him. And if there's no evil in it, then how could he do the constable's wife any harm? Eh?

*Escalus:* That's an interesting point. Very logical.—Constable, what do you say?

*Elbow:* My lord, this man's establishment is absolutely reputable, and so is he, and so is his mistress.

*Pompey:* Oh, really! Well, your wife is more reputable than all of us put together!

*Elbow:* You liar! No one has ever called my wife reputable!

*Pompey (To Escalus):* She was reputable even before she married him.

*Elbow:* Don't believe this scoundrel, sir. If you can imagine that I would marry a reputable woman—much less propagate with her—then fire me from my job now.

*Escalus:* That's all right, constable. I believe we're getting to a proper resolution of the problem.

*Elbow:* Thank you, sir. I knew I could count on your resolency.

*Escalus:* Yes, yes. Now, it seems that this fellow has some latent offenses.

*Elbow:* Eh? What kind?

*Escalus:* Latent.

*Elbow (Nodding knowingly and looking seriously at Froth):* Ah.—Indeed.

*Escalus:* And in order for you to discover them properly for the law, you should let him continue in his activities until you have discerned his crimes.

*Elbow:* Disurned?

*Escalus:* For purposes of the law, naturally.

*Elbow (Nodding again and looking at Froth):* Ah.—Well—if this fellow thought he could get away with anything, he'll be sadly mistaken. (*To Froth*) You hear that? Now you have to continue in your crimes—in Latin—and you'll be disurned—until you have no more urns.. And all your three-penny dishes won't save you, will they, you villain?—With or without prunes, eh?

*Escalus (To Froth):* Where are you from?

*Froth:* From here, sir—Vienna.

*Escalus:* Well, I advise you not to frequent the sort of establishment you were found in.

*Froth:* I shall miss it, sir.

*Escalus:* There's too much bad company in a place like that. Now you go home, and I don't want to hear another word about you.

*Froth:* Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

*(Froth leaves.)*

*Escalus:* And you—Pompey. What do you have to say for yourself?

*Pompey:* Truly, sir, I'm just a poor fellow trying to get by.

*Escalus:* As a pimp and bartender in a brothel? Is that a lawful occupation?

*Pompey:* If the law would allow it, sir.

*Escalus:* But the law doesn't allow it. We won't allow it in Vienna any more.

*Pompey:* And what shall you do to all the men in the city—neuter them?

*Escalus:* No. The punishment for such vices is hanging.

*Pompey:* If you did that, sir, there'd be no one left in the city. And all the property values would collapse.

*Escalus:* Maybe so. But in any case, I don't want to see you here again for any sort of complaint or you'll be sorry. Consider this a fair warning.

*Pompey:* Thank you, sir. *(Aside to the audience)* A fair warning but a useless one.

*Escalus:* Go home now.

*Pompey:* Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

*(Pompey leaves.)*

*Escalus:* Master Elbow, how long have you served as a constable?

*Elbow:* Seven and a half years, sir, in the service of the Duke.

*Escalus:* I can tell it's a strain on you. I'd say you need some help. Recruit a half dozen fellows you think are up to it, and bring them to my house.

*Elbow:* There aren't many who have the brain for it as I do, but I'll do my best, sir. Thank you, sir. Good night.

*Escalus:* Good night.

*(Elbow leaves.)*

*Escalus:* What time is it, Justice?

*Justice:* Eleven, sir.

*Escalus:* Come home with me, and we'll have a late dinner.

*Justice:* Thank you, sir. I will.

*Escalus:* I hate to think of what's going to happen to Claudio. And I can't do anything about it.

*Justice:* Lord Angelo is awfully strict.

*Escalus:* I suppose he has to be that way—for the general good of the city. But I still feel sorry for Claudio.

*Justice:* Me, too, sir.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 2, Scene 2.** *Another room in Angelo's house. Angelo is present when the Provost comes in.*

*Provost:* Sir, do you still want Claudio executed tomorrow?

*Angelo:* Yes. I gave you orders, didn't I?

*Provost:* Yes, my lord. I was just thinking that perhaps—well—it might not go over too well with the people.

*Angelo:* That's not for you to worry about. You just carry out your orders. Otherwise I'll replace you with someone who will.

*Provost:* Of course, sir. As you say, sir.—Em, what shall we do about Juliet?

*Angelo:* Take her someplace where she can have her baby.

*(A Servant comes in.)*

*Servant:* My lord, the sister of the condemned man Claudio wishes to see you.

*Angelo:* Sister? I didn't know he had one.

*Servant:* Yes, my lord. Her name is Isabella. She's preparing to join the sisterhood of Saint Clare.

*Angelo:* Is she, now?—All right, show her in. *(The Servant leaves.)* See that the pregnant woman gets what she needs, but no more than that.

*Provost:* Yes, my lord.

*(Isabella and Lucio come in.)*

*Angelo:* Stay a minute, Provost.—Yes, miss, what can I do for you?

*Isab:* I've come to plead with your Honour.

*Angelo:* I'm listening.

*Isab:* What my brother did—of course, it's an immoral act that should be punished. Yet, at the same time, I am pleading for his life. Condemn the act, but don't condemn my brother to death.

*(The Provost is reacting by praying silently to heaven. The suggestion is that he's on Isabella's side.)*

*Angelo:* You can't separate the criminal from the crime. The law condemns the crime. I'm just enforcing the law.

*Isab:* The law is just, of course—and may heaven protect you, sir.

*Lucio (Aside to Isabella):* Don't agree with him, for God's sake. Put your heart into it.

*Isab:* But must he die, sir?

*Angelo:* Yes, I'm afraid so.

*Isab:* Still, no one would fault you if you pardoned him.

*Angelo:* I won't pardon him.

*Isab:* But you could.

*Angelo:* If I won't, I can't.

*Isab:* It would do no harm to pardon him.

*Angelo:* It's too late. He's been sentenced.

*Lucio (Aside to Isabella):* Try harder.

*Isab:* But, your Honour, it would be a good thing for you as a man of authority to show mercy. If you were in my brother's place and he were in yours, he would show you mercy.

*Angelo:* You are starting to bore me, miss.

*Lucio (Aside to Isabella):* Don't give up.

*Isab:* If I were in your place, sir, I would not be so mean to a petitioner.

*Angelo:* Your brother is guilty, so what is there to discuss? You're wasting my time.

*Isab:* We are all sinners in the eyes of God, but He gave us the means of redemption. If God were as rigid as you are, how would you appear in his eyes? Would you want to be condemned for one mistake? No. You would want mercy. So show it now.

*Angelo:* Miss, it is the law that has condemned your brother. I am impartial. I would do the same if he were my own brother. He must die tomorrow.

*Isab:* No! Not tomorrow! He isn't ready! My lord, many men have committed the same offense, but they weren't executed for it.

*Angelo:* Only because the law wasn't enforced. If it had been enforced from the beginning, the offenses would never have continued. If I don't enforce it now, they will continue.

*Isab:* Please, your Honour, have pity!

*Angelo:* My pity is reserved for future offenders. If I deter them by enforcing the law now, I save them from punishment.

*Isab. (More angrily):* So!—You must be the enforcer, and my brother must be the one who dies. It must feel wonderful to have such power. But it is cruel to use it.

*Lucio (Aside to Isabella):* That's telling him.

*Isab:* If every man with authority acted like God, the angels would laugh and find us ridiculous.

*Provost (Aside, praying):* Please, God.

*Lucio (Aside to Isabella):* Keep going.

*Isab:* When men presume to be god-like, it is profane.

*Angelo:* Why do you persist?

*Isab:* Because men of authority can be wrong, but they have the power to correct their mistakes. Look inside yourself, sir. Are you so free of guilt that you would execute my brother? Do you not have normal human weaknesses?

*(Angelo turns his back to her and hesitates before replying.)*

*Angelo:* I have heard your appeal. Now you may go.

*Isab:* Please give me an answer.

*Angelo (Hesitating):* I will think it over. Come back tomorrow.

*Isab:* I'll do whatever it takes to change your mind, sir.

*(Angelo reacts nervously before replying.)*

*Angelo:* What do you mean?

*Isab:* I'll pray, my lord. I'll pray for heavenly rewards for you if you'll spare my brother.

*Angelo (Hesitating, looking at her with intense interest):* Come back tomorrow. I must consider.

*Isab:* Heaven keep you, sir. What time shall I come?

*Angelo:* In the morning—any time in the morning.

*Isab:* God save you, sir.

*(Isabella, Lucio, and the Provost leave. Angelo is silent for a moment and obviously upset.)*



*Angelo:* That woman makes me hot.—I swear, I could never be tempted by the dirtiest whore in Vienna—but she’s just the opposite. She’s so pure. She wants to be a nun.—A nun.—I’d fuck her. Hell, yes, I’d fuck her.

*(He leaves.)*

**Act 2, Scene 3.** *A room in the prison. The Duke, disguised as a friar, his head covered by a cowl, comes in, meeting the Provost.*

*Duke:* Hello, Provost.—You are the Provost, aren’t you?

*Provost:* Yes, I am. What can I do for you, friar?

*Duke:* I’ve come to minister to the spritual needs of the prisoners.

*Provost:* Good. There’s one in particular you must speak to.

*(Juliet comes in.)*

*Provost:* This is Juliet. She and her fiance committed a, uh—shall we say—an indiscretion—as you can see from her condition. Unfortunately, the young man, Claudio, has been sentenced to death for it.

*Duke:* Ah.—And when is this going to happen?

*Provost:* Tomorrow—apparently. *(To Juliet)* I’ve made arrangements for you. I’ll take you shortly.

*Duke:* Are you sorry for what you’ve done?

*Juliet:* Yes, father.

*Duke:* Do you love the man who wronged you?

*Juliet:* Of course—as much as he loves the woman who wronged him.

*Duke:* Then it was a mutual thing, was it?

*Juliet:* Of course. He didn’t force me.

*Duke:* Well, I think you’re more to blame than he is.

*Juliet:* Yes, I admit it. And I’m sorry.

*Duke:* That’s fine. But we should repent not out of fear of heaven but out of love for heaven.

*Juliet:* And I do. And I accept my shame in that spirit.

*Duke:* Good. I’m going to talk to your young man now. God be with you.

*(The Duke leaves.)*

*Juliet:* Poor Claudio. To think that he’s going to die tomorrow because of me.

*Provost:* I wish it were otherwise, my dear, believe me.—Come.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 2, Scene 4.** *A room in Angelo's house. Angelo comes in.*

*Angelo:* I can't stop thinking about that girl. I want to fuck her.—Me, the ruler of Vienna—the paragon of virtue.

*(A Servant comes in.)*

*Servant:* Your Honour, that girl Isabella is here.

*Angelo:* Send her in.

*(The Servant leaves. Angelo puts his hand on his heart.)*

*Angelo:* I can feel my heart pounding. This never happened to me before.

*(Isabella comes in.)*

*Angelo:* Hello, my dear.

*Isab:* I have come to know your pleasure, sir.

*Angelo:* My pleasure.—Ah—indeed.—If you would know it. *(More sternly)* Your brother shall be executed.

*Isab:* If that's your decision, sir, so be it. God keep you anyway.

*Angelo (Changing his tone):* However, it doesn't have to be right away.

*Isab:* I would be grateful for any reprieve so he might be better prepared.

*Angelo:* Not that I would pardon a sexual crime such as his.—Fornication—lust.—It's just as bad as murder—*(Slyly)* don't you think?

*Isab:* They're both sins, but as crimes they're not equal.

*Angelo:* Ah. Then tell me this. Which would you prefer—to see your brother executed, or to save him by giving up your body?

*Isab:* I'd rather give up my body than my soul. The body is something temporary, but the soul is eternal.

*Angelo:* I'm not talking about your soul. What I meant was—would you commit a sin as an act of charity to save your brother's life?

*Isab:* I am not understanding you, sir.

*Angelo (Coughs):* Ahem.—Perhaps I'm not making myself clear.—Look, your brother is facing a death sentence. Now suppose there was someone in a position to save him from this death sentence—and he wanted you to commit a charitable sin—by having sex.

*Isab:* Having sex? With who?

*Angelo:* With me.

*Isab:* With you?

*Angelo:* Yes. If you have sex with me, I'll spare your brother.

*Isab:* No! It's better for him to die and go to heaven than for me to sin and go to hell.

*Angelo:* You would let your brother die? Then why did you come and plead with me in the first place?

*Isab:* Because I love him.

*Angelo:* So you are willing to overlook his crime.

*Isab. (Hesitating):* I don't condone his crime.—I just want him to live.

*Angelo:* Then have sex with me, and he will live.—Damn it, I love you! I want you!

*Isab:* You don't mean it. You're just testing me.

*Angelo:* I do mean it. Don't you understand? It's a small sin to have sex with me. You'd be doing it for your brother, not out of any desire to sin. Your soul wouldn't be damned for it.

*Isab:* You wicked man! You hypocrite! And everyone thinks you're so—moral! I will denounce you! I'll tell everyone—unless you pardon my brother now!

*Angelo:* Who would believe you? Who's going to take your word against mine? You'll only make a fool of yourself. Now be sensible. *(He tries to take her by the hands, but she pulls away.)* Give me what I want. I want your body. Isabella—

*Isab:* No!

*Angelo:* Then your brother will die. And I'll see to it that it's a painful death.—I'll let you think it over.

*(Angelo leaves.)*

*Isab:* Who would believe this?—Such wickedness!—It's incredible!—I'll tell my brother. He'll understand. He'd rather die a dozen times than see his own sister disgraced.

*(She leaves.)*

**Act 3, Scene 1.** *A room in the prison. The Duke, disguised as a friar, is present with Claudio and the Provost.*

*Duke:* Do you think Lord Angelo will pardon you?

*Claudio:* I can always hope—although I think it's a long shot.

*Duke:* Steel your mind to accept death. Material existence is full of illusions and hardships. The afterlife is what really matters. Death comes to all of us. It's not worth fearing. If we feared it, every day on earth would be unbearable.

*Claudio:* Thank you, friar. I won't be afraid.

*Isab. (Within):* Hello!—Peace to all!

*Claudio:* That's my sister, Isabella.

*(Isabella comes in.)*

*Isab:* I must speak to my brother—in private.

*Duke (To the Provost):* Let's step outside.

*(The Duke leads the Provost out but pauses to speak to him aside.)*

*Duke (Aside to the Provost):* Not too far. I want to hear what they say.

*(The Duke and the Provost go and stand in the wing, just visible to the audience.)*

*Claudio:* Well, sister—what news?

*Isab:* Nothing good, I'm afraid. Lord Angelo is determined to—you know.

*Claudio:* So there's no hope. Well, I'm not surprised.

*Isab:* At least, there's no hope that you would accept.

*Claudio:* What do you mean?

*Isab:* Lord Angelo made a proposition—a totally vile proposition.

*Claudio:* What did he say?

*Isab:* He said he would spare you—if I—if I gave up my virginity to him.

*Claudio:* Angelo said that? Why, that bloody son-of-a-bitch! That hypocrite!

*Isab:* He is.

*Claudio:* Of course, you won't do it. It's out of the question.

*Isab:* I'd give up my life to save you—but I can't give up my soul.

*(Claudio turns away from her to think. He is reconsidering.)*

*Claudio:* Of course, as sins go, it's a rather minor one.

*Isab:* What do you mean?

*Claudio:* I mean—well—it's not as bad as murder—or witchcraft. *(He waits for her to answer, but she remains silent.)* Look at it this way—would he suggest it and take such a sin on himself if he knew he'd be damned for it—or if he thought you'd be?

*Isab:* What are you saying, brother?

*Claudio:* Well—can you not see the lesser of two evils?—my death, or losing your virginity?

*Isab:* Would you have me dishonoured? Would you have me live in shame for the rest of my life?

*Claudio:* Would you rather have me executed tomorrow?

*Isab:* Claudio!

*Claudio:* Look, I want to live. If you can save my life just by–

*Isab:* Shame on you, Claudio!

*Claudio:* Isabella, just listen to me, will you?

*Isab:* No, no, no! It's better that you should die!

*Claudio:* Isabella!

*(The Duke returns.)*

*Duke:* Ahem!—Excuse me, my dear. If I could just speak to your brother for a moment—sort of privately. You don't have to leave.

*(Isabella moves apart and does not hear the following conversation.)*

*Duke (To Claudio):* Listen.—Angelo was only testing your sister. Trust me on this. So forget about getting pardoned. *[Author's note: The reader should understand that the Duke is saying this to try to save Angelo's reputation, since he's responsible for appointing him as Deputy.]*

*Claudio (After a pause):* I'm sorry, Isabella.—I'm not afraid to die. To hell with life anyway.

*Duke:* Why don't you go and rest now.

*(Claudio leaves. The Duke goes to the wing and whispers to the Provost. The suggestion is that he wants privacy. The Provost nods and leaves.)*

*Duke:* I know you're a good girl, Isabella. I'm very surprised that Angelo propositioned you. What do you intend to do?

*Isab:* I've already said. I'm not going to do it. When the Duke gets back, I'm going to tell him the truth about Angelo. Whether people believe me or not, I'm going to do my best to expose him.

*Duke:* Of course, he'll deny everything. He'll just say he was testing you.

*Isab:* I suppose.

*Duke:* Now listen. I believe there's a way out of this. You can save your brother's life and also do a good deed for a lady who has been wronged—and you won't have to have sex with Angelo.

*Isab:* If this is possible, I'll do whatever you suggest.

*Duke:* Excellent. Do you remember a lady named Mariana? She was the sister of a soldier named Frederick, who was lost at sea.

*Isab:* I've heard of her. I heard she was a good lady.

*Duke:* Yes, she is. Now here's the story. Five years ago, Angelo was supposed to marry Mariana. They were engaged. But when Frederick was lost at sea, her dowry was lost, too. When Angelo found out, he broke off the engagement.

*Isab:* Really? That's terrible.

*Duke:* Yes. And she never got over it. She still loves him, even though he never spoke to her again. He made up some phony excuse that she was promiscuous, but that was a lie.

*Isab:* What a terrible way to treat a lady. Where is she now?

*Duke:* She lives in seclusion on the farm at Saint Luke's. You can help her—and your brother—at the same time.

*Isab:* What do you want me to do?

*Duke:* You go back to Angelo and tell him you accept his proposition, but the meeting has to be short, and it has to take place in a darkened room, and in complete silence. I'll arrange for Mariana to take your place. Angelo won't know the difference. Afterwards, he'll pardon your brother, and when he finds out it was Mariana he had sex with, he'll be forced to marry her.

*Isab:* What an ingenious plan! I'll do it.

*Duke:* Good. I'll go to Saint Luke's and talk to Mariana. You go to Angelo and tell him you agree. Then make an excuse to leave and come and meet me at Saint Luke's, and we'll escort Mariana back to the rendezvous place.

*Isab:* Very good, father. Thank you.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 3, Scene 2.** *On the street in front of the prison. The Duke, still disguised, comes in from one side and meets Elbow, Officers, and Pompey (as a prisoner) coming in from the other side.*

*Elbow:* We shall have no more of this prostitution business in Vienna, otherwise we'll end up with a city full of strange-looking, illiterate children! Do you want Vienna to look like London?

*Duke:* What's going on here?

*Pompey:* It's oppression, father. There's nothing wrong with prostitution. It makes a lot of men happy. Crack down on the money-lenders instead. That's what I say.

*Elbow:* Shut up, you.—Good day to you, father.

*Duke:* And to you. What's he in trouble for?

*Elbow:* Procuring, father. He procures. And he works for a madam who is a procuress. It's a sinful vice of procuration—or procurence.

*Duke (To Pompey):* You are a wicked man—living off the avails of prostitution. What a filthy way to make a living! It stinks!

*Pompey:* Oh, now, sir, I wouldn't exaggerate. It only smells a bit now and then.

*Duke (To Elbow):* You're taking him to prison, then?

*Elbow:* Yes. The Deputy will deal with him—*(To Pompey)* with a rope!

*Pompey:* Hold on. Here's a friend who'll bail me out.

*(Lucio comes in.)*

*Lucio:* Well, well, Pompey. Still pimping for old Mistress Overdone, are you? How is the old crone?

*Pompey:* She's sick. I think she caught a dose of—one of those diseases.

*Lucio:* That's just what she deserves. And so do you, come to think of it. So, you're off to prison, eh? Well, have a good time.

*Pompey:* Wait, wait, wait! I was hoping you'd put up my bail for me.

*Lucio:* Put up your bail for you? What a silly idea! And besides, you need a change of scenery—the longer the better.

*Pompey:* What? You won't bail me out? I thought we were friends?

*Lucio:* Of course. And I'm so happy for you.

*Elbow (Dragging Pompey):* Come on, you!

*(Elbow, Pompey, and the Officers leave.)*

*Lucio:* Well, friar, any news of the Duke?

*Duke:* The Duke? No, I haven't heard a thing. Why? What have you heard?

*Lucio:* Only rumours. Some people think he's visiting the Emperor of Russia—though I can't imagine why, can you?

*Duke:* No, I guess I can't.

*Lucio:* He shouldn't have left. Lord Angelo has been a terrible Deputy.

*Duke:* Do you think so? I thought he was doing a good job.

*Lucio:* He's an asshole—pardon my language.—This crackdown on vice has gone too far.

*Duke:* Vice must be dealt with, though.

*Lucio:* What's the point? You're going to execute people for being normal? For having sex? It's just a minor vice. You might as well execute them for drinking, or gambling, or overeating. That Angelo is cracked. And he's a bad guy, believe me. I'll bet when he pisses, it's ice-cold.

*Duke:* I can see you have strong opinions about him.

*Lucio:* Yes, I do. And I'll tell you something. The Duke would never hang a man for getting his fiancée pregnant. He has more sympathy in him than that. And there's a good reason.

*Duke:* Oh?

*Lucio:* Yes. The Duke—(*Leans closer as if to speak confidentially*) has his wild side—if you get my drift.—Eh? Ha, ha!

*Duke:* You mean with ladies?

*Lucio:* Of course. Underneath his robe, he's a rascal like everyone else.—Not you, of course.

*Duke:* I don't believe it.

*Lucio:* Don't be naive, friar. I know. He's got his kinky side. And he likes to get drunk now and then, too.

*Duke:* I'm sure you're wrong, sir.

*Lucio:* No, no. I know him petty well. In fact—I believe I know the real reason why he left town.

*Duke:* And what would that be?

*Lucio:* He went off to have a good time somewhere where he wouldn't be recognized. Probably disguised himself as a low-ranking gentleman of some sort.

*Duke:* Really, sir, I think you're slandering him.

*Lucio:* Oh, don't get me wrong. I like the guy well enough. It's just that he's not exactly what people think.

*Duke:* Is that so?

*Lucio:* For instance, people think he's smart, but he's actually somewhat of a fool. He doesn't understand government. Escalus is the brain of the government. Without him, the Duke would be lost.

*Duke:* Hmm.—When the Duke gets back, I intend to tell him what you said. What's your name, by the way?

*Lucio:* Lucio. The Duke knows me. I don't care what you say to him. He wouldn't dare punish me. I know all his secrets.

*Duke:* Ah—I see.

*Lucio:* Em, by the way, is Claudio going to be executed tomorrow?

*Duke:* Apparently.

*Lucio:* Tsk!—What a crock. Angelo's an asshole.—Well, I'll be going now, friar. Goodbye. (*He starts to leave but stops.*) Oh—and another thing about the Duke. He eats meat on Fridays—and he would French-kiss a bag-lady.—And you can tell him I said so. Goodbye.



*(Lucio leaves.)*

*Duke:* Well! Where was my bad reputation hiding all these years?

*(Escalus, the Provost, and Officers come in with Mistress Overdone as a prisoner.)*

*Escalus:* Come on! You're going to jail!

*Mist. Over:* Oh, please, sir! Have pity!

*Provost:* Eleven years in this dirty business, your Honour. But now that we have a sworn complaint, she's finished.

*Mist. Over:* Don't listen to Lucio! He hates me! He got one of my girls pregnant and he promised to marry her, and then he jilted her. I've been taking care of the baby ever since, and he thinks I'm doing it to spite him.

*Escalus:* We'll deal with him in due course, but right now you're going to jail. *(To the Officers)* Take her.

*(The Officers take Mistress Overdone out. She complains. Escalus, the Provost, and the Duke watch them leave. After a pause, Escalus speaks.)*

*Escalus (To the Provost):* Angelo won't change his mind. Claudio is sentenced to die tomorrow. See that he gets a visit from a priest.

*Provost:* The friar's already done that.

*Escalus:* Good evening, friar.

*Duke:* Blessings to both of you, my lords.

*Escalus:* Em, I don't think I got your name.

*Duke:* Lodowick.

*Escalus:* Ah.—You're not from around here, are you?

*Duke:* No. I've been sent from Rome on special business for the Pope.

*Escalus:* Oh. How interesting. And what's the news of the world?

*Duke:* The world?—Pfff!—Going to hell—in a manner of speaking. Morality is collapsing everywhere you look. But that's hardly news, is it?—Em, so tell me—what sort of fellow is your Duke?

*Escalus:* He's a good man. A thoughtful man.

*Duke:* And what are his pleasures?

*Escalus:* Pleasures? Oh, he doesn't care about pleasures for himself. He only wants others to be happy. *(Sighs)* And I wish we had him back now.—So, you've seen to Claudio, have you?

*Duke:* Yes. He's resigned to his fate. For a while he thought he might get out of it, but I told him frankly that there was no hope.

*Escalus:* Then you've done your duty. I tried to appeal to Angelo for mercy, but he wouldn't budge.

*Duke:* If he's as moral as the morality he imposes on others, God bless him. If not, it'll come back to haunt him.

*Escalus:* Now there's a thought. *(To the Provost)* We'd better go see Claudio.—Goodbye, father.

*Duke:* Peace to you both.

*(Escalus and the Provost leave.)*

*Duke:* Well!—I put Angelo to the test by leaving him in charge, and now I'm finding out there's another side of him I didn't know existed. But he'll be put in his place before this is over.

*(The Duke leaves.)*

**Act 4, Scene 1.** *The farm at Saint Luke's. Mariana is pacing slowly, looking depressed. The Duke comes in.*

*Duke:* You look unhappy, Mariana.

*Mariana:* As usual, I suppose, father.

*Duke:* I've come to see you to enlist your aid. It would mean happiness for you and a tremendously good deed for three nice, young people who need help.

*Mariana:* What is it, father?

*Duke:* It involves a very good lady.—Ah, here she comes.

*(Isabella comes in.)*

*Duke:* This is Isabella, the sister of Claudio, a nice, young man who is condemned to die.—Isabella, have you made the arrangements?

*Isab:* Yes, father. It will be in the garden-house after midnight. There's a vineyard behind the garden, and a gate. I can find it in the dark.

*Mariana:* What's this all about?

*Duke:* We'll explain it to you on the way.—Come.

*(They all leave.)*

**Act 4, Scene 2.** *A room in the prison. The Provost comes in with Pompey.*

*Provost:* Now—come here. Listen to me. Can you cut off a man's head?

*Pompey:* I always thought that was a wife's job.

*Provost:* Never mind that. The heads in question are not married. There are two condemned men scheduled for execution tomorrow morning—Claudio and Barnardine. The executioner needs a helper. If you agree to help him, you'll be set free.

*Pompey:* All right. In that case, I'll do it. But he'll have to instruct me.

*Provost:* He will. Hold on.—*(Calling)* Abhorson! Yo!

*(Abhorson comes in.)*

*Abhor:* You called, sir?

*Provost:* Yes. This fellow will help you with the executions tomorrow. He has no experience, so you'll have to explain it to him. If you like him, you can hire him full-time, but that's up to you. I should tell you, however, that he's a pimp by profession.

*Abhor:* A pimp? Well—I think that might bring some discredit to my profession.

*Provost:* I rather doubt it. Anyway, I'll leave him in your hands.

*Abhor:* Very good, sir.—Come on, you. I'll explain what you have to do.

*Pompey:* Thank you for the opportunity. I always wanted to get ahead.

*Provost:* And send in Claudio and Barnardine.

*Abhor:* Yes, sir.

*(Pompey and Abhorson leave.)*

*Provost:* That other guy—Barnardine—he's the one who really deserves to die. He's a murderer, and he totally doesn't give a shit about anyone or anything. There's no reason for him to exist at all.

*(Claudio comes in.)*

*Provost:* Claudio, I have the warrant for your execution. It'll be at eight a.m. It's after midnight now. I don't suppose there's any point in trying to get some sleep. Where's Barnardine?

*Claudio:* He's drunk and sleeping. He doesn't care.

*(A knock is heard within.)*

*Provost:* All right, you go back and sit in your cell.

*(Claudio leaves. Then the Provost leaves to answer the knock and returns with the Duke, still disguised.)*

*Provost:* Glad to see you, father. Come to be with the condemned on their last night?

*Duke:* Yes.—Em, has Isabella been here tonight?

*Provost:* No. Are you expecting her?

*Duke:* Yes, actually.

*Provost:* Is there any hope for Claudio?

*Duke:* There may be.

*Provost:* Oh, really? Do you know something I don't?

*Duke:* Just wait.

*(A knock is heard. The Provost leaves and returns with a Messenger.)*

*Duke:* Ah! I'll bet this is Claudio's pardon.

*Messenger (Handing a letter to the Provost):* The Deputy sends you these instructions and says to follow them exactly.

*Provost:* Of course. Thank you.

*(The Messenger leaves.)*

*Duke:* Good news for Claudio?

*Provost:* It's odd that he would send me a letter now, as if I don't know what I'm supposed to do.

*Duke:* Read it.

*Provost (Reading in part):* Hmm—"Have Claudio executed at four a.m., and Barnardine in the afternoon.—Send me Claudio's head as proof by five a.m."—And he says, don't fail or I'll be sorry.—What do you make of it?

*Duke:* I'm flabbergasted!—I thought—

*Provost:* You thought what—that it was a pardon?

*Duke:* Yes.

*Provost:* Why?

*Duke (Hesitating):* Never mind. I was mistaken.

*Provost:* I wonder why he wants Claudio executed so early?

*Duke:* Who's Barnardine?

*Provost:* Oh, he's a murderer—a low criminal type. He's been a prisoner for nine years.

*Duke:* Really.—I would have thought he'd have been executed a long time ago.

*Provost:* Appeals. He has friends on the outside. But his luck has finally run out.

*Duke:* How is he taking it?

*Provost:* It means nothing to him. He's not afraid of death, and he's not afraid of the law. He doesn't care. He's sleeping right now—drunk.

*Duke:* You let him drink?

*Provost:* Yes, what's the difference? He's well-behaved. He has the run of the place. We couldn't force him out if we tried. He gets fed. He doesn't have to work. He doesn't care how long he lives. He doesn't place any particular value on his life.

*Duke:* Provost, I want you to do me a favour. I can prove to you that Claudio is no guiltier than Angelo. Just give me a few days.

*Provost:* What do you mean?

*Duke:* Don't execute him—at least not yet.

*Provost:* But I have my orders. I'm stuck with them.

*Duke:* Just trust me. I'm a friar, okay? I wouldn't have you do anything wrong. What I want you to do is execute Barnardine in Claudio's place and send his head to Angelo.

*Provost:* But he'll know it's not Claudio.

*Duke:* No, no, you can fake it. Shave his head and his beard. That'll throw Angelo off. He probably won't look closely. He won't know the difference.

*Provost:* Oh, but father—

*Duke:* Listen, I promise, if you get in any trouble for this, I'll back you up. I'm the Pope's man, remember.

*Provost:* But it's against my oath.

*Duke:* Your oath is to the Duke, right?

*Provost:* Yes—and to those he delegates.

*Duke:* The Duke won't disapprove of this.

*Provost:* How do you know?

*Duke:* I didn't really intend to resort to this, but—(*He rummages in his pockets and produces a seal and a letter.*)—Here.—This is the Duke's seal.—And this is a letter in his handwriting. Recognize it?

*Provost:* Yes, but how did you—?

*Duke:* I can't explain now. Just believe me that I'm in a position to know more than Angelo knows. He's going to get letters with conflicting information about the Duke.—The Duke is dead, or he's in a monastery, or whatever.—But, in fact, the Duke is returning in two days.—It says so right here (*Indicates the letter*).

*Provost:* This is very confusing, I have to tell you.

*Duke:* I know, I know. It'll all be clear later. But right now just do as I say. Have Barnardine executed at four a.m. I'll go speak to him now. It's my duty in any case.

*Provost:* Okay, father. I guess I'll just trust you on this.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 4, Scene 3.** *Another room in the prison. Pompey comes in with Abhorson.*

*Pompey:* This place is almost like home. It's full of customers from the whorehouse—thieves, murderers, con artists—

*Abhor:* Never mind them now. Go wake up Barnardine. It's his time.

*(Pompey goes out, and the following conversation is heard offstage.)*

*Pompey:* Barnardine! Wake up!

*Barn:* What do you want?

*Pompey:* The executioner orders you up, sir. You are to be hanged.

*Barn:* Fuck off! I'm sleeping!

*Pompey:* You can sleep later.

*Barn:* Fuck off! I'm drunk!

*(Pompey returns.)*

*Pompey:* He won't come, sir.

*Abhor:* Damn it! You're supposed to be my helper! Drag him out here if you have to!

*(Pompey goes out. Cursing and complaining are heard offstage. Then Pompey returns with Barnardine, who is drunk.)*

*Barn:* Master Abhorson, why do you wake me up so early?

*Abhor:* I have your warrant for execution.

*Barn:* I'm drunk. I'm not fit to be executed.

*Pompey:* At least you'll avoid a hangover.

*Barn:* Fuck off!

*Abhor:* The friar's here for you.

*(The Duke comes in.)*

*Duke:* Master Barnardine, I've come to comfort you in your last hour. I will pray with you.

*Barn:* I'm not in the mood. I'm drunk, and I'm not ready.

*Duke:* But you must, sir.

*Abhor:* I have the warrant.

*Barn:* I don't give a fuck about any warrant. I don't intend to die today, and that's final. Come back tomorrow.

*(Barnardine goes out.)*

*Duke:* Tsk!—He's not fit to live or to die.

*Abhor (To Pompey):* Come on.

*(Abhorson and Pompey go after Barnardine. Then the Provost comes in.)*

*Provost:* Is Barnardine ready for execution?

*Duke:* No. If I don't pray with him first, his soul will be damned to hell. But he won't let me.

*Provost:* Hmm.—Oh, by the way, we have a prisoner who just died of fever a little while ago.

*Duke:* Who?

*Provost:* A pirate named Ragozine. He was the same age as Claudio. He could probably pass for him. Suppose we were to send his head—

*Duke:* Brilliant! *(He looks up at heaven.)* Thank you!—You see how God works?—Now, you take that fellow Ragozine's head to Angelo, and that'll give me some time to prepare Barnardine.

*Provost:* What about Claudio?

*Duke:* Hide him—somewhere—anywhere. I guarantee you, within two days the problem will be solved.—Hurry.

*Provost:* Okay, father. I'm trusting you.

*(The Provost leaves.)*

*Duke:* Now I'll send a letter to Angelo, by way of the Provost, telling him that I'm on my way back to Vienna, and he should meet me tomorrow three miles outside of town and escort me in with a formal procession.

*(Isabella comes in.)*

*Duke:* Ah!—There you are.

*Isab:* Father, did Lord Angelo send my brother's pardon?

*(The Duke hesitates before answering. The suggestion is that he has some reason for lying. The audience will have to wait till the last scene to know why.)*

*Duke:* Em—I'm sorry, my dear.—Your brother was executed.

*(Isabella bursts into tears.)*

*Isab:* He lied!—Angelo lied!—He broke his word!

*Duke:* There, there, my dear. Your brother's in a better place.

*Isab. (Sobbing):* Angelo is a snake! He's the devil!

*Duke:* Now listen. The Duke is returning tomorrow. You can tell him everything. I promise you you'll have justice.

*Isab:* Will I?

*Duke:* Yes.—Collect yourself now. *(He gives her a letter.)* Take this letter to Friar Peter. He's the one who knows what the Duke is doing. Tell Friar Peter to meet me at Mariana's house tonight. I'll explain everything to him, and he'll arrange it that you can speak to the Duke. I won't be there, but you must trust me. I know you're terribly hurt, but you must bear up as bravely as possible, and you'll see how things will work out all right for you.

*(Lucio comes in, upset.)*

*Lucio:* Good evening, friar.—Isabella, I'm so sorry. I loved your brother.

*Isab:* Thank you.

*Lucio:* If that damn Duke had been here instead of going off on a vacation, it wouldn't have happened.

*Isab:* Please—don't blame it on the Duke.—I have to go now. Good night.

*Duke:* Good night, Isabella.

*(Isabella leaves.)*

*Duke:* That's not a nice thing to say about the Duke.

*Lucio:* He's no saint. He's off indulging his vices. I know.

*Duke:* You should bite your tongue.

*Lucio:* No, I'll wag it. Come along with me and I'll tell you plenty of dirty things about the Duke.

*Duke:* What do you have against him anyway?

*Lucio:* Aw—just a bit of trouble a long time ago. I knocked up this wench. I swore I didn't—otherwise I would've had to marry her.

*Duke:* Well, you're no saint either, are you?

*Lucio:* I never said I was.—Are you leaving?

*Duke:* Yes, I suppose.

*Lucio:* I'll walk with you. Don't worry, I'll watch my language for your sake.

*Duke:* All right.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 4, Scene 4.** *In Angelo's house. Angelo and Escalus come in. Escalus is holding letters.*



*Escalus:* The Duke's letters contradict each other. I don't know what to believe.

*Angelo:* Maybe he's lost his mind. Why does he want me to meet him at the gates?

*Escalus:* I don't know.

*Angelo:* I thought he didn't like public gatherings for his sake. Now he wants us to announce to everyone an hour before he arrives that he's coming, and if anyone has any complaint against either of us, they can speak it openly.

*Escalus:* Maybe he just wants to hear the complainers right away instead of giving them time to make up lies.

*Angelo:* Well, you deal with it. And round up everyone of rank. Might as well give the Duke a proper greeting.

*Escalus:* Okay, no problem. Good night.

*Angelo:* Good night.

*(Escalus leaves.)*

*Angelo:* I don't like this at all.—That girl—suppose she shoots her mouth off?—No. She wouldn't. It would be too embarrassing. And nobody would believe her anyway.—Tsk!—I wish I hadn't executed Claudio.—But what else could I do? He would've killed me for fucking his sister—a future nun, no less.—Aw, fucking hell. One wrong move leads to another. That's how it goes.

*(He leaves.)*

**Act 4, Scene 5.** *The fields outside of town. The Duke, no longer disguised, comes in with Friar Peter.*

*Duke:* Friar Peter, I want you to deliver these letters *(Gives him letters)*. The Provost is in on it. Tell Flavius, Valentius, Rowland, and Crassus where I am and have them bring the trumpeters to the gates.

*Friar Peter:* Right, my lord!

*(Friar Peter leaves. Then Varrius comes in, out of breath.)*

*Duke:* Ah! Varrius!

*Varrius:* I came as quick as I could, my lord.

*Duke:* Come with me. We have to meet up with some friends.

*(They leave.)*

**Act 4, Scene 6.** *A street near the city gate. Isabella and Mariana come in.*

*Isab:* I hate to be the one to accuse Angelo, but Friar Lodowick said I should. He said there was a reason.

*Mariana:* Then just trust him.

*Isab:* And he said not to be surprised if he or anybody else spoke against me.

*Mariana:* Then he must have everything figured out somehow. Just do as he says.—Where is Friar Peter?

*Isab:* Here he comes.

*(Friar Peter comes in.)*

*Friar Peter:* Everything's ready. I'll take you to the gates. Come on.

*(They all leave.)*

**Act 5, Scene 1.** *At the city gate. Standing to one side are Isabella and Mariana, both veiled, with Friar Peter. Coming in slowly (from within the city) are Angelo, Escalus, the Provost, Lucio, Lords, Officers, and Citizens. Then, coming in opposite (from outside the gates) are the Duke (as himself), Varrius, and Lords.*

*Duke:* Angelo! Escalus! It's good to see you!

*Angelo and Escalus:* Welcome back, my lord.

*Duke:* I hear you've done an excellent job running city in my absence. I'm grateful to you.

*Angelo and Escalus:* Thank you, my lord.

*(Friar Peter steps forward with Isabella.)*

*Friar Peter:* My lord, this lady must have a word with you. Her name is Isabella.

*(Isabella unveils. Angelo reacts nervously.)*

*Isab:* My gracious Duke, I have been wronged—terribly wronged—and I ask for justice.

*Duke:* All right. What's the problem?

*Angelo (Perturbed):* Don't listen to her, my lord. She's not in her right mind. I had to execute her brother.

*Isab:* I speak the truth, my lord—although it might seem hard to believe.—This man—your Deputy—is a murderer, a hypocrite, and a virgin-violator.

*Duke:* Oh, that's ridiculous!

*Isab:* No, my lord. Your Deputy, Lord Angelo, whom you regard as so honourable and so good, is a villain of the worst sort.

*Angelo:* Shut up, you troublemaker!—My lord—

*(The Duke raises his hand for silence.)*

*Duke:* Miss, what is your complaint—specifically?

*Isab:* My brother, Claudio, was sentenced to death for having sex with his fiancée and getting her pregnant. I was about to enter the sisterhood when he sent Lucio to me to try to appeal to Lord Angelo for mercy.

*Lucio:* That's right. Her brother sent me.

*Duke:* I didn't ask you to speak.—Go on, Isabella.

*Isab:* I went to see this scoundrel Deputy of yours—

*Duke:* Now, now, just tell me the facts.

*Isab:* I begged Lord Angelo to spare my brother. And he said—the only way he would spare him—was if I had sex with him. *(Reactions of shock from the crowd)* So I agreed. I accepted the shame—and the sin—and I had sex with him. And then he broke his word and had my brother executed anyway.

*Angelo:* Lies! All lies! She's crazy!

*Duke:* What an absurd story! Do you expect me to believe that Lord Angelo, a man of spotless character, would do something so vile and hypocritical? Someone put you up to this, I think. Who was it?

*Isab:* The truth will come out, sir—God willing.

*Duke:* You've slandered a highly-respected lord. You'll be punished for that. Now, who put you up to it?

*Isab:* Friar Lodowick.

*Duke:* Lodowick? I never heard of him.—Does anyone here know him?

*Lucio:* I do, sir. He's a troublemaker. If he wasn't a friar, I would've punched him out for the bad things he said about you.

*Duke:* Indeed! Well, I'll take care of him! *(To Friar Peter)* Do you know him?

*Friar Peter:* Yes, my lord. He's not a troublemaker. And he never said anything bad against you.

*Lucio:* Oh, but he did!

*Friar Peter:* Well, I'm sure he can speak for himself, but at the moment he's in bed with a cold. He sent me here to speak for him. Isabella is lying about Lord Angelo having violated her, and I have a witness to prove it. *(He points to Mariana, still veiled.)*

*Duke:* Just as I thought. *(To an Officer)* Take her away.

*(The Officer takes Isabella out. Then Mariana steps forward, still veiled.)*

*Duke:* You see, Lord Angelo? No one's going to slander you as long as I'm around.—Take off your veil, madam, so I can see your face.

*Mariana:* I'm sorry, my lord, but I can't show my face until my husband tells me to.

*Duke:* Oh. You're married?

*Mariana:* No, my lord.

*Duke:* Then what are you—a virgin?

*Mariana:* No, my lord.

*Duke:* A widow?

*Mariana:* No, my lord.

*Duke:* What, then?

*Lucio:* Probably a prostitute.

*Duke:* Nobody asked you.

*Mariana:* My lord, I was never married, and I'm not a virgin. I had sex with my husband, but he doesn't know it.

*Lucio:* He must have been drunk at the time.

*Duke:* Will you shut up!

*Lucio:* Yes, my lord.

*Mariana:* I will explain, my lord. Isabella, who accuses Lord Angelo, also accuses my husband of having sex with her, but I can swear that I was in bed with him at the time.

*Duke:* But if you were never married, then who is your husband?

*Mariana:* Lord Angelo. He thought he was having sex with Isabella, but it was really me.

*Angelo:* This has gone far enough! Take off that veil and let's see who you are!

*Mariana:* My husband orders me. *(She removes her veil.)* You know me, Angelo. You once promised to marry me—remember? I was the one you had sex with in the dark, not Isabella.

*Duke (To Angelo):* Do you know this woman?

*Angelo:* Yes, my lord. Five years ago we were engaged, but I broke it off. Partly it was because she couldn't provide the dowry she promised—but mainly it was because I found out she was a woman of loose morals. I haven't seen her for the past five years. I swear it.

*Mariana (To the Duke):* My lord, I am engaged to Angelo, and he had sex with me Tuesday night in his garden-house. I swear it.

*Angelo:* My lord, give me justice! Both these women are crazy. Someone has put them up to this. Probably that Friar Lodowick.

*Duke:* All right. Whoever it is, you can deal with them as you wish. Escalus will help you. *(To Friar Peter)* And you said Lodowick wasn't a troublemaker. That puts you under suspicion, too. Where is he?

*Friar Peter:* The Provost knows where he is. It was Lodowick put them up to it, sir.

*Duke (To the Provost):* Go get him.

*(The Provost leaves.)*

*Duke:* Angelo, I'll leave you to deal with this. I must go.

*Angelo:* Thank you, my lord!

*(The Duke leaves.)*

*Escalus:* Lucio, didn't you say Friar Lodowick was a troublemaker?

*Lucio:* Yes, my lord. Under that robe of his he's a damned villain. And he slandered the Duke. And if he says anything bad about me, you can be sure it's a lie.

*Escalus:* You stay here. You can confront him when we get hold of him. *(To an Attendant)* Bring back that girl Isabella. I want to question her myself.

*(The Attendant leaves.)*

*Lucio:* My lord, I think she'd be more likely to confess in private than in front of all these people.

*Escalus:* You think so?—Mm—could be.

*(The Officers return with Isabella, and the Provost returns with the Duke, disguised as Friar Lodowick.)*

*Escalus (To Isabella):* We have a witness who says you were lying.—*(To the Duke)* And you—Friar Lodowick—did you encourage these women to slander Lord Angelo?

*Duke:* No.

*Escalus:* Sir, you are in some serious trouble.

*Duke:* I don't have to talk to you. I'll talk to the Duke.

*Escalus:* We are delegated by him to act in this matter. You speak to us.

*Duke:* Oh, sure. You and Angelo. He's going to investigate himself, is that it?

*Lucio:* I told you he was a troublemaker.

*Escalus:* Just shut up a minute, okay?—*(To the Duke)* What kind of friar are you, inciting these women to tell lies about Lord Angelo? I don't care if you're a friar. I'll have you put in the stocks and whipped.

*Duke:* Not so fast. The Duke wouldn't dare punish me. I'm the Pope's man, remember. I came here to observe your city, and I want to tell you it stinks with corruption. And your laws are a joke.

*Escalus:* I won't stand for this! You're going to jail!

*Angelo:* Lucio, tell us what you know about this man—whatever bad things you know.

*Lucio:* I'll expose him for you, my lord.—*(To the Duke)* You remember me, don't you?

*Duke:* Yes. We met in the prison.

*Lucio:* And what did you say about the Duke? That he was a womanizer and a drunk!

*Duke:* No, that's what you said about him.

*Lucio (To Angelo):* What a liar he is! You should have heard him slander the Duke!

*Duke:* I love the Duke as I love myself.

*Angelo:* Ha! That's just what a liar would say!

*Escalus:* This man insults our intelligence. Take him to prison—and these women, too—and Friar Peter!

*(The Provost lays hands on the Duke, who brushes him off.)*

*Duke:* No, you don't!

*Angelo:* You're resisting arrest?—Lucio, help the Provost.

*Lucio:* Gladly, sir!—*(To the Duke)* You lying son-of-a-bitch!—And why don't we just get a good look at the face of a liar!

*(He pulls off the friar's hood, revealing Duke Vincentio. Gasps of shock all around.)*

*Lucio:* Uh-oh.

*Duke (Looking sternly at Angelo):* If you have anything to say, better say it now.

*Angelo (Weakly):* My lord—it seems you know everything.—I can't defend myself.—I'm guilty.—Punish me as you see fit.—I deserve to die.

*(The Duke beckons to Mariana, who steps forward.)*

*Duke:* You were once engaged to this woman, weren't you?

*Angelo:* Yes.

*Duke:* Fine. Now you're going to marry her, as you should have done five years ago.—Friar Peter, you do the marriage—right now.—Provost, you go with them.

*(Angelo, Mariana, Friar Peter, and the Provost leave.)*

*Escalus:* This is incredible!

*Duke:* Come here, Isabella. I was on your side before, and I'm on your side now.

*Isab:* My lord, I'm sorry if I've caused any trouble.

*Duke:* No, no, don't worry about it. I know you're still heartbroken over your brother's death. And you're probably wondering why I didn't just step out of my disguise and save him.—Well, it all happened so fast. But he's in a better place now, and you should take comfort in that thought.

*Isab:* I do, my lord.

*(The Duke gives her a long, admiring look. Then Angelo, Mariana, Friar Peter, and the Provost return.)*

*Duke:* Well, that was fast.

*Friar Peter:* I gave them the special short service.

*Duke (To Isabella):* For Mariana's sake, I would ask you to forgive Angelo.—However—seeing as how he condemned your brother to death for doing what he himself did and tried to take advantage of you and then broke his promise, I think the law is pretty clear on this. Angelo must die. Measure must be answered by measure.—Angelo, I sentence you to death.

*Mariana:* My lord, please don't do this to me now that I have a husband.

*Duke:* He owed you the marriage as a matter of honour. Now you'll inherit everything he owns, and you'll have a good dowry to find yourself a better husband.

*Mariana:* He's the only one I want. I love him. I never stopped loving him.

*Duke:* Sorry, but my mind's made up.

*Mariana:* Isabella, help me. Speak for me.

*Duke:* Don't ask her to help you. Her brother's ghost would rise from his grave if she were to plead for Angelo's life now.

*Mariana:* Isabella! Angelo is sorry!

*Duke:* Doesn't matter. He has to die.

*Isab. (Kneeling before the Duke):* My lord, have pity on Angelo.

*Duke:* You would spare him?

*Isab:* I would show him more mercy than he showed my brother. In this he may find redemption and be a better person. I believe he was sincere—and when he saw me, he had a moment of weakness. And although he intended to have sex with me, he didn't actually.

*(The Duke gestures for her to rise, and she does.)*

*Duke:* There's another reason why Angelo must die.—Provost, why was it that Claudio was executed at such an unusual hour?

*Provost:* Those were my instructions.

*Duke:* And was that in the warrant?

*Provost:* No. I received the instructions by messenger. You were there at the time.

*Duke (Looking at Angelo):* A serious breach of the law.—(To the Provost) Did you not realize that it was an improper instruction?

*Provost:* I wasn't sure what to think. It was only later that I decided I had made a mistake—which I regretted. Another prisoner can vouch for that. He should have been executed, but I kept him alive to speak for me now.

*Duke:* Who is he?

*Provost:* His name is Barnardine.

*Duke:* Go get him.

*(The Provost leaves.)*

*Angelo:* Sir—I am so ashamed. I deserve to die.

*Duke:* I think so, too.

*(The Provost returns with Barnardine, Claudio [muffled by a hood], and Juliet.)*

*Duke:* Which one's Barnardine?

*Provost (Indicating):* This one.

*Duke:* A certain friar told me about you. He said you were a stubborn man with no awareness of an afterlife. You live for today and never think of tomorrow. Is that true?

*Barn:* It's true, my lord. I'm sober now and I'll speak true to you, seeing as how I never had any grievance against your lordship. Whatever the friar said, I'm sure it was true. I admit it openly. And whatever the Provost says, you can believe that, too, as he never mistreated me and never told a lie in all the years I was in prison.

*Duke:* You were rightly condemned to death—but now I pardon you. And I hope my mercy inspires you to live a better life.

*Barn:* Thank you, my lord. God bless you.

*Duke:* Friar Peter, I leave him to you for spiritual counseling.—Now—who's this other fellow?

*Provost:* He's another prisoner I saved. He should have died the same time as Claudio. In fact, he's Claudio's double.

*(The Provost unmuffles Claudio.)*

*Isab:* Claudio!

*Claudio:* Isabella!



*(They embrace in tears.)*

*Isab. (To the Duke):* You said things would work out all right for me—and they have. I have my brother back.

*Duke:* I'd have him as my brother, too—if you were to marry me. *[Author's note: In the original, Isabella has no more lines, leaving us unsure of what she will do. But Shakespeare's intentions are obvious by now. Isabella will marry the Duke, and her expression must signal to the audience that she is willing.]* Forgive me for keeping this a secret, but I had to make Angelo believe he had really executed your brother.—*(To Angelo)* Consider yourself reprieved from a death sentence. You've been given a second chance.

*(Angelo, overwhelmed, kneels and kisses the Duke's hand.)*

*Angelo:* Thank you, my lord!

*Duke:* Who's left to deal with?—You, Lucio!

*Lucio:* Em—

*Duke:* So I'm a drunk, am I? A fool? A womanizer?

*Lucio (Very nervously):* Heh, heh—I was only joking, my lord. Please don't hang me. Perhaps just a good whipping.

*Duke:* Oh, you'll get a good whipping, all right. And right after that, you'll get what you deserve.

*Lucio (Moaning):* Oh, God!

*Duke:* If any woman can say that you made her pregnant, you will have to marry her.

*Lucio:* You mean—the girl from the whorehouse? Oh, please, sir, don't make me!

*Duke:* You will marry her.—Officers, take him to prison.

*(The Officers take Lucio out.)*

*Duke:* Claudio, now you can marry Juliet.—Mariana, be happy with Angelo.—Escalus, you've been a good and trustworthy friend. I owe you a lot.—Provost, you're due for a promotion.

*Angelo:* My lord—whose head—?

*Duke:* Oh, yes—the head. It was a criminal named Ragozine. It was a complicated plot. I can see some of you are still bewildered, so come back to the palace with me, and I'll tell you all about it.—And Isabella, you and I have things to talk about—privately.

*(They all leave.)*

**END**

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